

## 26th Street Gateway News

Volume 1, Issue 1

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

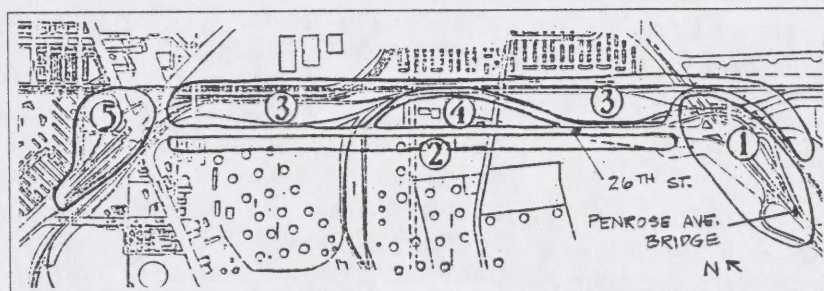
February 1991

### A Facelift for Philadelphia's Front Door

In response to the disappearance and decline of Philadelphia's green spaces, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society recently initiated a new program, Center City Green.

One of our most challenging projects is the landscape improvement of the 26th Street Gateway, a mile long stretch that connects the Penrose Avenue Bridge with the Schuylkill Expressway. It's a drive that only takes a minute but currently leaves a negative impression of our City that lasts a lifetime.

Atlantic Financial under the leadership of Donald R. Caldwell, funded the initial study performed by Andropogon Associates. The study examined the visual



character of this gateway corridor and how appropriate horticultural intervention could soften negative aspects and enhance positive ones.

The study also noted existing horticultural assets such as the stand of mature trees along the railroad embankments and the meadows between the tank farms and the bridge. The landscape improvements will

build on the existing assets to portray the image of an urban parkway.

The Society is acting as the catalyst in bringing together a coalition effort to undertake the reshaping of this gateway. Watch for future editions of this newsletter to keep posted on developments.

### MILESTONES



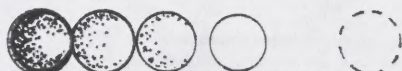
### Penrose Meadow in Bloom

At first, this Gateway project seemed enormous and unmanageable, until we broke it into sections as shown in the graphic above. To illustrate the potential of 26th Street as an urban parkway, the Society decided to develop a funding and planting plan for the corner of 26th and Penrose.

In conjunction with a "3R" Program (restoration, repaving and rehabilitation) PennDOT removed the asphalt and roughgraded the northwest corner of 26th Street and Penrose Avenue in late winter

1989. The Philadelphia Water Department provided Earthlife to create a medium for trees, shrubs and wildflowers that were planted by Heyser Landscaping under the Society's direction last spring. Crabapples, junipers, viburnums, and black-eyed Susans, all plants that can handle the stresses of an urban environment, are planted in front, near the roadway. The back section of the site has been seeded with an assortment of wildflowers and this spring Penrose Meadow I will burst into bloom.





## Partners Keep The Ball Rolling

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's successes to date with the 26th Street project are due to the moral and financial support of many. Early supporters include PennDOT, The City of Philadelphia's Streets and Water Departments.

James J. Anderson Construction Company, Inc., BHC Securities Inc., Continental Bank, First Pennsylvania Bank and Aldo Sylvestri, Inc. provided early financial assistance.

Last spring, Scott Paper Company rallied its neighbors and other businesses to support these plantings by offering the

Society a challenge grant: every \$ we could raise up to \$5,000 Scott would match. Grateful thanks to the following for responding so generously: American Airlines, Chevron, USA Inc., Delta Airlines, Inc., the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Philadelphia Hotel Association (Adams Mark, Airport Marriott, Hotel Atop the Bellevue, Four Seasons, Independence Park, The Rittenhouse, Sheraton Society Hill, Sheraton University City and The Warwick), F.C. Haab Heating Oils, Henderson Group, Inc., the Philadelphia Belt

Line Railroad Company, United Airlines and USAir.

Next summer, when the plantings mentioned below are complete, Philadelphia residents and visitors will reap the benefits of Sun Company's generosity and good citizenship. Philadelphia Electric Company also played a vital role in preparing for those plantings by reworking a 26th Street construction contract to make installation easier along the fence line. Twenty-sixth Street is everyone's "front door", and the Society needs all the help it can muster to keep the ball rolling.

## MILESTONES

Last fall Sun Company made a large and generous donation to the Society to support the first phase of landscape improvements that will extend from the plantings at the corner of 26th and Penrose along the edge of Sun's refinery tanks to Hartranft Street.

Thanks to mild weather, Moon Landscaping Inc. has been able to clear, clean and grade the site this winter as well as install a wooden guardrail and metal trellis sections along the fence.

Come spring, the character of the area will change dramatically when the plants are added. Groves of deciduous trees and evergreens will line the road edge and frame views into a landscape of wildflowers, ornamental grasses and a vibrant Ribbon of Gold (yellow blooming flowers) with a turf

border. Flowering vines will ramble up the trellis sections and thousands of perennials will be planted at the base of the fence.

Construction is scheduled for completion by late May, 1991. The new plantings will be assessed during the summer and observations incorporated into the design for the second phase of the Sun Company fence edge.

## Sun Company Has The Edge

*For more information  
contact:*

**CENTER CITY GREEN**

215-625-8280

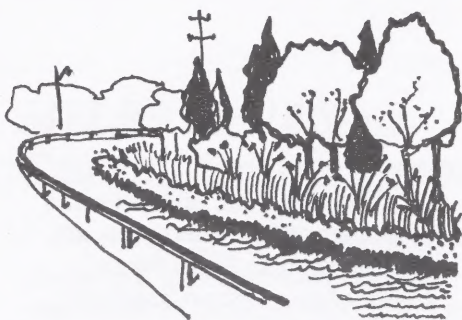
325 Walnut Street

Philadelphia, PA 19106

## ON THE DRAWING BOARD

- o Steen Outdoor Advertising property landscape improvements.*
- o Penrose Meadow II - new plantings at the other three corners of the intersection.*
- o Conrail embankment landscape management strategies.*





# *The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's 26th Street Gateway News*

Volume 2, Issue 1

March 1993

## **The 26th Street Gateway Partnership**

Dear Friends,

When we first started talking at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society about improving the environment along 26th Street, the mile-long stretch of highway that links the Penrose Avenue Bridge with the Schuylkill Expressway, it seemed an impossible task. Our design consultants, Andropogon Associates, developed a grand vision for this Philadelphia gateway, but potential funding partners were initially hesitant to get involved until they could see some momentum.

Not to be deterred, members of the Society's 26th Street Committee decided if we couldn't convince them with words and pictures, we'd show them the real thing. We gathered momentum with monies raised through the Philadelphia Flower Show, several

of the airlines, and a challenge grant from Scott Paper Company, which enabled us to replace the asphalt with crabapples, red maples, junipers and black-eyed Susans.

The landscape worked its magic and the 26th Street Gateway began to take shape. The City of Philadelphia's Department of Streets joined the team to play a pivotal role in attracting state and federal dollars, as well as PennDOT's participation. Sun Company, Inc. also added its support the following summer to fund the plantings you've been enjoying along the fence line that borders Sun's tank farm. Last year, Consolidated Rail Corporation climbed aboard to sponsor landscaping efforts on its property.

This newsletter will bring you up to date on our expanding group of partners, on some of the new horticultural projects and the challenges we and the plants face on this unusual site, and also our plans for 1993.

Sincerely,

Jane Pepper, President

*Many thanks to our valued partners along 26th Street:*

**Boeing Company**  
**Consolidated Rail Corporation**  
**Pennsylvania Department of Transportation**  
**Philadelphia Dept. of Streets**  
**Philadelphia Electric Company**  
**Sun Company, Inc.**

## **MILESTONES : Penrose Meadows Phase II**

The piles of earth soil visible at the intersection of 26th Street and Penrose Avenue signal that construction is underway. This second phase of the Penrose Meadows landscape improvements is a joint venture of the **City of Philadelphia Department of Streets**, the **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation** and the **Pennsylvania Horticultural Society**.

The new landscape areas will reflect the design theme visible on the northwest corner. A wooden guardrail will delineate the road

edge from a band of ornamental grasses and perennials. Gentle sweeps of wildflowers will be punctuated by groupings of flowering shrubs and shade trees. As you descend from the Platt Bridge, you'll experience the intersection from a completely new point of view.

**Keystone Conservation Services**, the contractor for this project, has been on the site since November 1992. Work completed to date includes overall clearing, rough grading, and selected vegetation removal. The installation is being

supervised by **Larry Bender**, Department of Streets Inspections Bureau, with guidance from Andropogon's project designer, **Jose Alminana** and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Public Landscapes Manager, **Barbara Olejnik**.

Keystone has already tagged trees and shrubs at local nurseries that will be installed later this spring. As soon as the weather permits, work will resume and the project is scheduled to be completed by mid-summer.



# Andropogon's Design Approach

The emerging landscape at 26th Street is largely the creative vision of **Andropogon Associates** the project's design consultants.

It is the firm's hallmark to champion the cause of native plants and resuscitate failing landscapes, whether they're corporate campuses, municipal parks or industrial sites such as the 26th Street Gateway. They advocate sustainable landscape design and believe that each landscape is a living system that requires care and maintenance in order to develop a healthy balance.

The landscape fringes along 26th Street are left over sections of what was once a tidal marsh, prior to the presence of the oil refineries and other industrial uses.

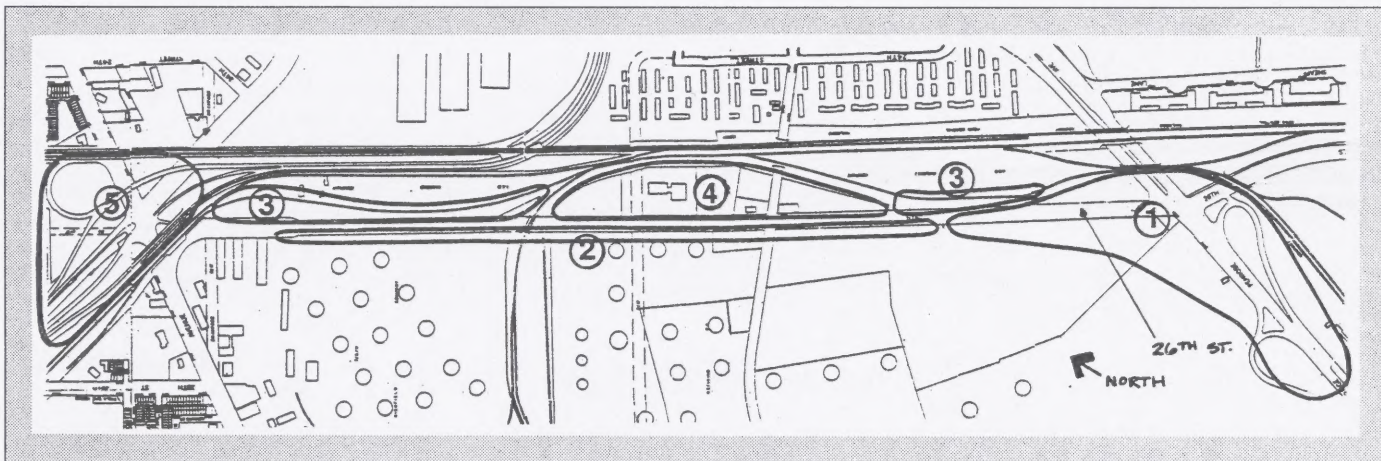
Andropogon looked to see how the landscape could function as a connective "biotic corridor", linking green areas from the Philadelphia International Airport through to the parks and green edges of Philadelphia and the region.

The design approach to this project has been to capitalize on what already exists in the landscape — like the fragments of meadows and old field vegetation and the beautiful groves of trees on the tops of the slopes on the east side — and enhance the area with native trees, shrubs, and perennial flowers and grasses to create a naturalistic parkway. They have avoided "prettifying" the landscape with petunias and marigolds and fussy plantings along the roadside.

The refineries, railroad yards and other existing land uses are not the culprits. Even the car crusher has a certain "demonic splendor" about it, as described by **Carol Franklin**, a partner in the firm. It is the years of neglect, dirt and grime that have left their legacy on our city's industrial fringes.

The landscape architects at Andropogon looked beyond the obvious limitations of the site and developed a new image for the area. One that combines not only good horticultural applications but also considers management and maintenance practices.

The final result will be a sustainable landscape that evolves over time to produce a healthier, species rich environment.



## The Five Major Landscape Areas of the 26th Street Gateway Corridor

The one-mile straight stretch of 26th Street is recognized as a distinct link in the airport-to-center-city drive. Its visual character is largely determined by land use and land ownership. There are five major areas, each within its own distinct character, which comprise the overall visual experience.

- 1 26th Street & Penrose Avenue intersection, "Penrose Meadows"
- 2 Sun Company Refinery Edge
- 3 Railroad Embankments of Conrail and CSX
- 4 Private Lands (Steen Outdoor Advertising, Mary Pruitt Estate)
- 5 26th Street and the Schuylkill Expressway Interchange



## MILESTONES : Conrail Embankments

The east side of the 26th Street corridor has started to undergo a transformation. **Conrail** has funded a four-year maintenance management project to clean up the area along their railroad embankments, thanks to support from **Charles Marshall**, Senior Vice President of Development.

This includes removing invasive weeds, clearing out brambles and overgrown vines, and hauling away tons of litter and debris. It's like cleaning off years of dirt and grime from a beautiful old building. Soon you will be able to see what's been covered up for years and appreciate the existing stands of hardwood trees. About half of the billboards along this stretch of road have been removed. This will enable us to plant additional shrubs and perennials to enhance views into this area and stabilize the slopes with more appropriate vegetation.

**Moon Landscaping** began work on the site in late fall 1992. The challenge this spring will be to get a jump start on all those weeds lying dormant under the snow during the winter.



## Coming Soon: More Gold at Sun's Refinery Edge

One of the biggest design and horticultural challenges for the Gateway Project was how to incorporate into the overall scheme the 3/4 mile, eight foot high chain link fence that borders the west side of 26th Street and encloses Sun Company's tank-farm. The narrow strip of ground in front is hard and

sterile; in back is a macadam-covered expanse.

**Andropogon Associates'** creative solution was to use the fence as a backdrop for a colorful Ribbon of Gold border of flowering perennials and ornamental grasses punctuated by upright junipers and flowering trumpet vines on trellises.

Thanks to **Sun Company's** support, this scheme was installed in 1991 on the first section of the refinery edge up to Hartranft Street, midway along 26th Street.

First the old sidewalk was removed, the soil amended, a planting bed constructed, and the new sidewalk and curbing laid. Water run-off had to be diverted through new drainage channels to the street. Next, wire mesh trellises were constructed and

attached to the fence and finally the plants were installed.

From all accounts, this unique experiment has been a great success, with the fence line set ablaze each summer as the plants come into bloom. The rest of the refinery fence, from Hartranft Street to the Schuylkill Expressway, will get under construction this spring, thanks to the enthusiastic support of **Dick Jackman**, Vice President of Communications and **Eileen Impriano**, Director of Contributions at Sun.

Andropogon has completed the plans and specifications, and the Society will be soliciting bids in March with construction beginning in May. In preparation for this project, **Philadelphia Electric Company** installed drainage pipes underground along a portion of this fence section in 1991, as part of their larger construction project on 26th Street. So all systems are go.

Look for the entire mile stretch on the west side to be in bloom by late summer.





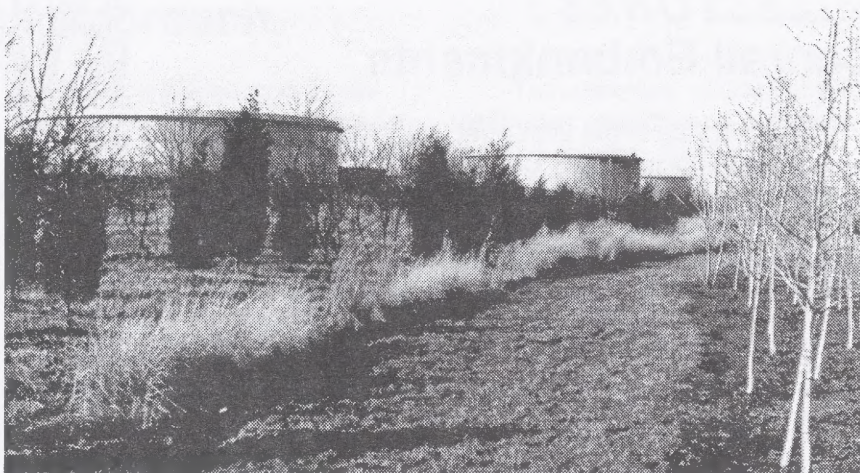
# Keeping the Landscape Looking Its Best

Few transformations evoke responses of pleasurable surprise like those of well-designed landscapes for residences and public buildings, along highways, even at shopping centers! And the recent plantings of trees, shrubs, and perennials on the west side of 26th Street near Penrose Avenue have drawn rave reviews for their dramatic impact as you enter the City.

The three year old landscape is already changing and will continue to do so as it matures, each season looking as beautiful yet different than the year before. Horticulture is known as the "slowest of the performing arts," and to retain its beauty, the dynamic landscape needs to be managed through a regular maintenance program. Without proper *maintenance*, the landscape will cease to serve its original purpose.

Well, we finally used the word "maintenance," usually a subject few want to consider. Maintenance of few things these days receives high priority; it seems so unglamorous. Yet a well managed maintenance program is the best insurance policy for the substantial capital investment in a project's development.

Currently, horticultural maintenance tasks along the 26th Street Gateway are performed by **Moon Landscaping**, under contract to the Pennsylvania



Horticultural Society. **Kenneth Dunmire** directs a crew of five for mowing, weeding, fertilizing, mulching, pruning, and other tasks -- such as straightening trees and correcting drainage problems. There's also the requisite task of litter and trash removal on a weekly year round schedule (although actually, a lot less trash accumulates now than before the plantings!).

Presently, **Sun Company, Inc.** is funding the maintenance of the completed northeast corner of the 26th and Penrose intersection and the plantings along the fence line on the west side of 26th Street.

**Conrail's** four-year funding commitment includes maintenance for a portion of their track embankments on the east side as they're cleaned out and replanted. And volunteers from the **City of Philadelphia's Department of**

**Streets** have undertaken periodic clean-ups of the road cartways and surrounding areas.

The Society's role is to develop and manage a comprehensive maintenance program for the entire gateway area. The Gateway Project needs additional partners for this emerging coalition and financial support for continued maintenance of state-owned lands at the intersection. We believe that investment in the landscape maintenance of this project is an important contribution to the City's image. We hope you agree and will join us to support this effort.

Grateful thanks to the members and friends of the **Garden Club of Philadelphia**, who raised \$3,000 for 26th Street Gateway maintenance through a tour of Washington, D.C. gardens, organized by club member **Julie Leisenring**.

## ON THE DRAWING BOARD

- ✓ *Steen Outdoor Advertising property landscape improvements*
- ✓ *Chevron landscape improvements*
- ✓ *Schuylkill River & 26th Street interchange*
- ✓ *Foundation for Architecture's "Directions Philadelphia" Sign*

*For more information contact  
Blaine Bonham, Executive Director  
Philadelphia Green  
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society  
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Philadelphia, PA 19106  
215-625-8280*





# 26th Street Gateway News

from THE PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Volume 3, Issue 1

June 1994

## An Introduction to the 26th Street Gateway

Dear Friends,

A trip to Philadelphia from the airport along 26th Street was once an experience travelers would as soon forget as they drove by piles of trash and tangles of weeds.

The transformation that's taken place along this important Philadelphia gateway is a testimony to the power of collaboration between City and State agencies and private organizations, with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society as project leader.

The new curbs and fences, stands of trees and masses of

bulbs, perennials and grasses that now brighten our trips on 26th Street come to us courtesy of our partners listed below.

*Boeing Company*  
*Camden Iron & Metal, Inc.*  
*Chevron U.S.A. Products Co.*  
*Consolidated Rail Corp.*  
*Pennsylvania Department of Transportation*  
*Philadelphia Department of Streets*  
*Philadelphia Electric Company*  
*Sun Company, Inc.*

As you will see in this newsletter, the project has unusual challenges both financial and horticultural, but we take great pride in the achievements of the 26th Street Coalition and thank its members for their generosity and support as we build this giant yellow and green jigsaw puzzle.

There's lots more to do, but together we'll get there. If you can provide help to the coalition, do let us know.

Sincerely,

Jane G. Pepper, President

## MILESTONES:

### ISTEA Funding for 26th Street

This year we have teamed up again with the good guys at the **Philadelphia Department of Streets** on an exciting new phase of landscape improvements on 26th Street near the Schuylkill Expressway interchange. The City received funds for their portion of the project from the Federal **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)** Transportation Enhancement Program (whew!). We are currently developing plans for additional curbing, guardrail, meadow areas, hedgerows, flowering trees, shrubs and perennials to complete the gateway at the northern end. Construction for this phase is scheduled to begin in spring 1995.



Andropogon Associates, Ltd.



## Landscape Management the Natural Way by Andropogon Associates, Ltd.

The conventional response to a highly disturbed urban site like the 26th Street Gateway would be to spend \$2 million removing everything, trucking in topsoil, installing a horticulturally intensive garden and spraying everything in sight. Instead, the principles of urban ecology have been applied, the site's resources assessed, and

site over time. All desirable native plants were tagged before work began, pruned where necessary, and protected during construction. In areas where native meadow grasses were retained as part of the design, existing soil was disturbed as little as possible, merely topdressed and overseeded. In areas of new planting,

urban areas will need to be monitored and controlled intermittently, and turf and meadows will be mowed at appropriate intervals. Occasional thinning of native successional plants will be necessary, as will dividing and moving perennials which make up the "ribbon of gold". In this way, the early phases of the project will provide plants already acclimated to the site for later phases. Also, trash will be picked up weekly and repairs made to protection barriers, trellises, etc., if they are damaged.



all salvageable native plants and topsoil saved. By doing this, the costs of the project have been kept reasonable, a landscape is being established which will become sustainable, meaning that it supports larger environmental goals. As a result, native habitats are being saved and strengthened which will provide a vital biological refuge in the city.

Landscape management is an integral part of the project's design process. Invasive non-native vines, shrubs and trees were removed by hand or by very selective herbicide application, enabling the already substantial native plant populations to re-colonize the

existing soil was amended with Earthlife, a by-product of recycled waste generated within the city of Philadelphia.

The success of the 26th Street Gateway project will depend on not treating it like a "hit and run" project, as is so often the case. Instead, a continuous program of carefully targeted management and maintenance will ensure that the landscape realizes its potential and becomes increasingly self-sufficient. Ultimately, as desirable plant species become more firmly established, the need for extensive management will slowly decrease. Invasion by pest species from surrounding

### ***A corridor of diversity***

Despite its industrial appearance, the 26th Street Gateway has the potential to become a biological corridor of enormous value to Philadelphia. Its unique location can potentially connect wildlife to other natural areas along the Delaware, the lower Schuylkill, and Roosevelt Park. By reinforcing the native plant populations of woodland, hedgerow and meadow, the landscapes of 26th Street are inviting the return of a whole array of wildlife habitats to this area. Rabbits, birds, butterflies are now being regularly sited in the project area, and their numbers and diversity are expected to increase as larger portions of the corridor are brought back to their native state.



## Horticultural Report: The Winter of Our Discontent

The winter of 1993 is one we will all long remember, even the plants! Generally speaking, the majority of the plantings along 26th Street survived the winter very well. What didn't look so great early this spring were the Eastern red cedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) that are planted along the Sun Refinery fence edge. Why? Because the winter can affect plants in several ways:

1. Prolonged low temperature can damage the roots of plants that are not tolerant of cold below a certain level; this year temperatures dropped to minus five degrees.
2. Buds of some flowering trees and shrubs can be frozen which will affect spring bloom;
3. Ice can weigh down branches and break limbs or cause cracks on woody plants.
4. High winds can desiccate or dry out evergreen foliage especially when salt is used on roadways; salt can also damage tender roots and accelerate desiccation, resulting in brown or dried-out foliage on evergreens.

Our Eastern red cedars fell victim to #4, but with pruning and regular watering, they are starting to bounce back and new green growth will eventually fill in the brown areas. The cedars are more tolerant of salt spray than other evergreens because they are native to the Jersey shore, however the road salt was tough even on these stalwart plants.

## Coming Soon: Replanting of the Conrail Embankments

As part of the project to develop a comprehensive program for the renovation and long term management of the 26th Street Gateway, PHS is now tackling the Conrail embankments which frame the highway on the east side of 26th Street. **Conrail** has made a four year commitment to fund the clean-up, replanting and management of this area.

The railroad embankments, once lined with woodland fragments, have in recent years become a jungle of heaping vines and coarse roadside weeds. Many of the desirable trees were being cut down to maintain visibility for the billboards and to provide clearance beneath the power lines. In addition, accumulating trash added to the unsightly appearance of this area.

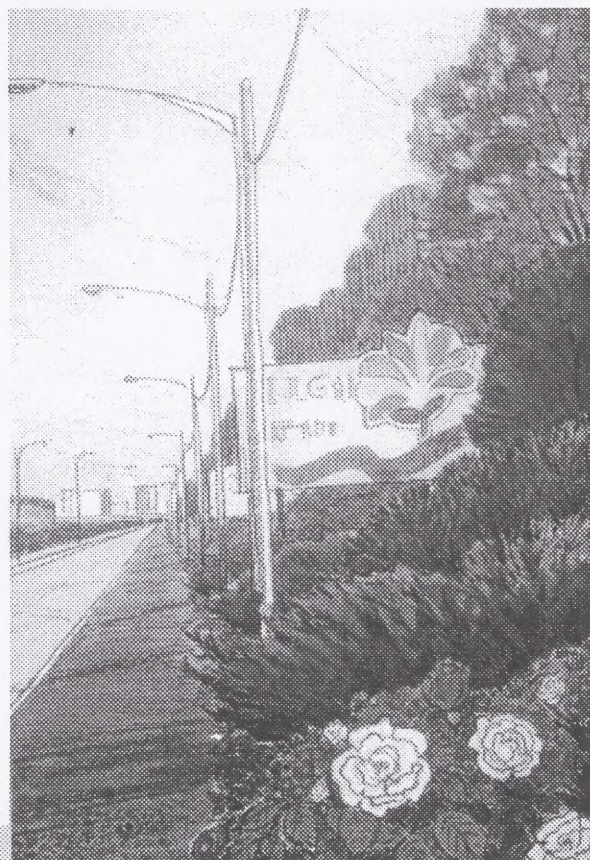
So far, trash and debris have been removed from the embankments above the

south-east corner of Penrose Avenue and 26th Street. The non-native, invasive species of plants such as Ailanthus, mulberry, Japanese knotweed and oriental bittersweet have been removed and new planting will begin this summer.

The steep slopes will be reforested with groves of sassafras and hickory. Thickets of lower growing plants, including shining sumac, bayberry, inkberry, arrowwood and seafoam roses will be planted where visibility is needed. On the shallow slopes, meadows of native grasses and wildflowers will be established, mirroring the

meadows across the road.

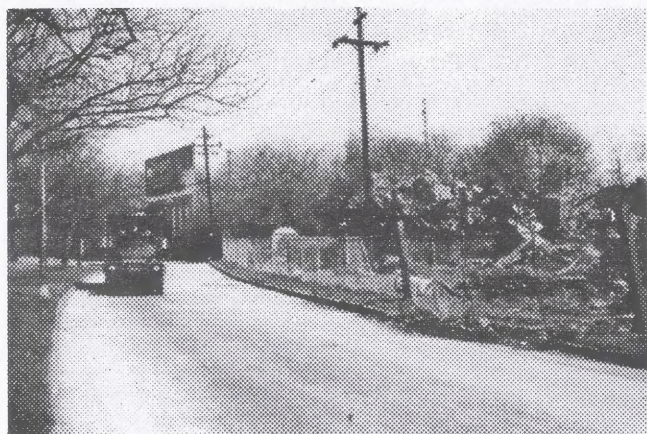
The transformation of the embankments is depicted below in the sketch by **Andropogon Associates**.





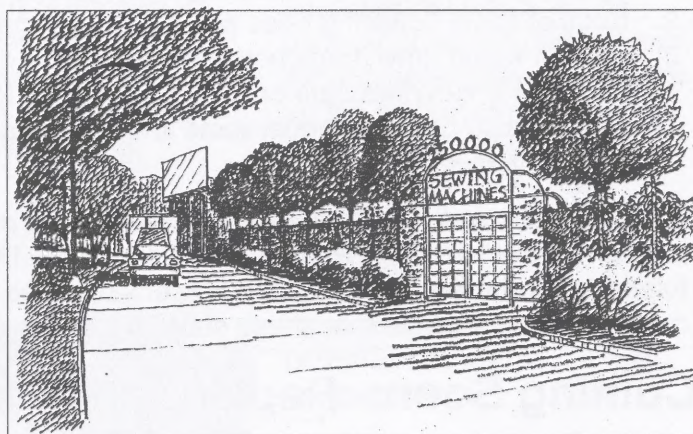
## MILESTONES: Recycling Taken to New Heights

Inspired by what's been going on with the 26th Street Gateway landscape improvements, **Camden Iron and Metal** (a.k.a. "the Car Crusher") wants to be a partner in this project. Camden Iron's **James MacFarlane** met with our consultants, Andropogon Associates, to discuss potential design ideas outlined below.



### Existing Car Crusher Property

The car crusher is invaluable to the city and its environs for its enormous recycling capabilities, transforming 330,000 junked cars per year into 500 million tons of usable scrap metal that is sold all over the world. Despite its uniqueness, there is nothing to identify the site or proclaim to visitors the important environmental function of the car crusher. You just see heaps of metal and don't realize the contribution this landmark makes to the city.



*photo and sketch by Andropogon Associates, Ltd.*

### Proposed Car Crusher Property Edge

New entrance gates display the amounts of recycled cars and processed scrap metal that the facility generates in a typical year. The edge between the fence and the roadway is planted variously with vines, shrub roses, and the ribbon of gold. A planting strip immediately behind the fence at either end of the property is planted with a row of trees. Berms on either side of the center gate are landscaped with groves of understory trees, shrubs and grasses.

## ON THE DRAWING BOARD

- ✓ *Penrose Meadows II (the intersection at 26th & Penrose) -- the planting and construction were completed in June.*
- ✓ *More plans for plantings on the north side of Penrose Avenue are in the works for Fall 1994 installation.*
- ✓ *Sun Company Fence Edge -- Phase II construction is in its final stages.*
- ✓ *We are working on a comprehensive maintenance plan.*

*For more information contact Blaine Bonham, Executive Director, Philadelphia Green Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, 325 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106, 215-625-8280*





# 26th Street Gateway News

from THE PENNSYLVANIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Summer 1995  
Volume 4, Issue 1

## Welcome to the 26th Street Gateway

Dear Friends,

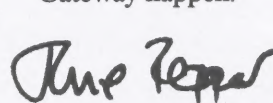
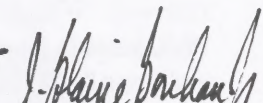
Rarely a week goes by that we don't hear raves from business associates and friends about their trip into the city through the 26th Street Gateway. Many have watched the progress over several seasons and eagerly discuss each new design and every new horticultural event.

No doubt we'll hear from these fans again as the next phase of construction starts up on the east side of 26th Street and at the Penrose Avenue intersection. The City's Department of Streets will bid out the contracts this fall. Renovation of the Conrail embankments will continue, and planning will get underway with our consultant, Andropogon Associates, for landscaping

a new section of Sun Company's property near the Platt Bridge.

The transformation of this once ugly entrance to Philadelphia continues. The enthusiastic participation of these partners and our other "team members" listed below have made our coordination of this project a pleasure. This past year, Philadelphia Outdoor Advertising joined the team, and we especially welcome owner Les Kaplan.

We look forward to hearing from you if you would like to help with this project or have an idea or comment to share with us. Teamwork makes the Gateway happen.

  
Jane G. Pepper President  
  
J. Blaine Bonham, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Philadelphia Green

Boeing Company  
Camden Iron & Metal, Inc.  
Conrail  
PECO Energy

PennDOT  
Philadelphia Department of Streets  
Philadelphia Outdoor Advertising  
Sun Company, Inc.

## MILESTONES: Partners Salute the Gateway

Sun Company by Richard P. Jackman, Director, Corporate Communications

Time has been described as a dressmaker, specializing in alterations. But when time gets a little help from its friends at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, things of wonder can happen - and they're happening right now with the Society's 26th Street Gateway project. A four-year dream fulfilled has converted a crossroads of man at his worst into an intersection of nature at her best.

Sun Company has been a citizen of the Philadelphia area for an entire century and has a stake in the way the city looks. Sun has a refinery that borders on 26th Street and when the Society promised a plan to change a desolate area into a delightful one, Sun promised its share of the price tag.

Now, through perseverance and performance, a mess has turned into a meadow. Visitors to the city on the way from the airport can count the flowers instead of the old tires, the blooming bulbs instead of the broken bottles.

Sun offers a three-way salute to those who believed that what was ugly

didn't have to stay that way.

☺ Sun salutes the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society for its relentless pursuit of the possible.

☺ Sun salutes the city and state entities that cooperated in this venture.

☺ And Sun salutes the private companies, including itself, for enlisting in this environmental turnaround.

### Conrail

by Charles N. Marshall

No! No! No! We don't do landscapes. We won't pay. We don't even know where 26th Street is.

So began the dialogue between Conrail and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) about Philadelphia's principal airport gateway. Little prepared was Conrail for the juggernaut of Jane Pepper and Blaine Bonham and their determination to convert a civic eyesore into a matter of community pride.

26th Street is the much traveled but little recognized highway connecting the

Platt Bridge with the Schuylkill Expressway. Stretching north from the car crusher past Sun's refinery, 26th Street is abutted on the east by two tracts of Conrail property. Before PHS and its remarkable persuasive powers arrived, the railroad embankments were instantly recognizable by their distinctive mixture of ailanthus trees, poison ivy, and happy families of pre-owned tires.

By enlisting first PennDot, the Streets Department, and then the adjoining landowners, PHS was able to build momentum. Imaginative plans by Andropogon Associates to combine selective existing flora with sustainable plantings of largely native species captured the imaginations of all who saw them. Most important, PHS was able to persuade Conrail and the other participants that an opportunity to help Philadelphia might cost less than an involuntary and grudging clean-up.

Today, 26th Street is a work in progress, but also a delight. Conrail is pleased to be playing a part.



## **ISTEA-Funded Project Links Northern and Southern Ends of Gateway to Philadelphia**

by Andropogon Associates, Ltd.

In 1993, Federal funds from the **Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) Enhancement Program** became available to support further improvements to the 26th Street Gateway. With the cooperation of the **Philadelphia Department of Streets** and **PennDOT**, the ISTEA project has advanced through design and construction documents and is scheduled to be constructed this fall.

The proposed improvements include installation of a turf strip and a wood guardrail along the east side of 26th Street, new curbing at the roadway edge, and new drain inlets. Road edge improvements will compliment planting of Conrail's railroad embankments scheduled for late this fall. The embankment landscaping will include wildflower meadow establishment, shrub island planting between the billboards and tree pruning within the woodlands.

The ISTEA improvements and the embankment landscaping will visually tie together the railroad property and interspersed parcels to give the east side of 26th Street a complementary identity to the ribbon of grasses, wildflowers and trellis planting along the refinery edge on the west side of the street.

ISTEA funds will also be used to landscape three traffic islands and median strips that flank the expressway ramps at the entrance to the Schuylkill Expressway (linking the 26th Street Gateway from Penrose Avenue to I-76 west). Scheduled for planting in spring 1996, ISTEA landscaping will extend the plantings from the inner coastal plain species that form the backbone of the southern end of the Gateway at the Penrose corner, to plants native to the edge of the Piedmont region. The Expressway ramps entering and exiting the city will be planted with

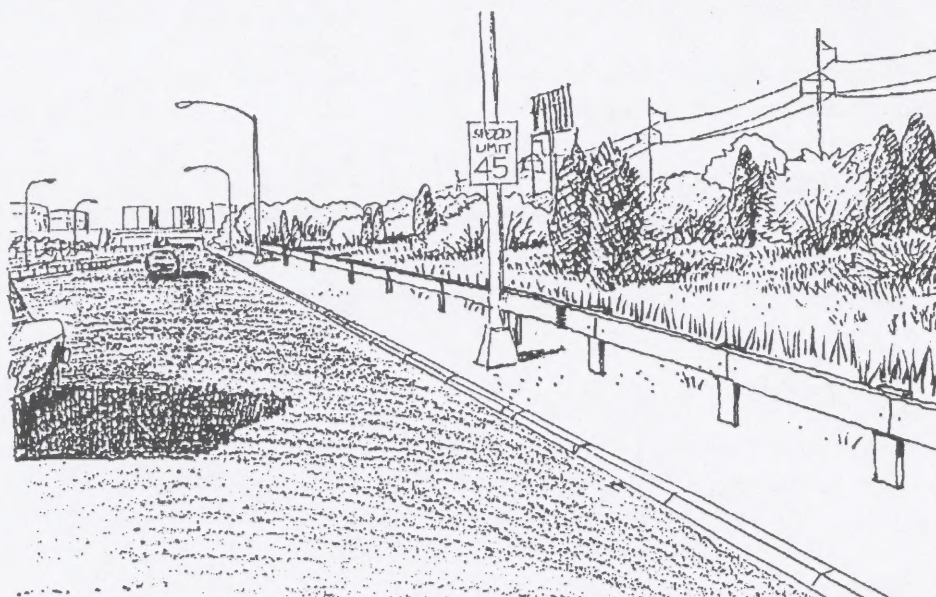
meadows of little bluestem, indiagrass, and goldenrods, punctuated with drifts of sweetgums, red oaks, cedars, shadbush and chokeberry.

Mixtures of low maintenance grasses, including fine fescues and native warm season grasses, were experimentally seeded at two sections of the Conrail embankments last fall to reduce mowing frequency and are planned for the ISTEA slopes as well. Weed-whacking at meadow height has proven to be a useful technique for

guardrail along 26th Street from Penrose Avenue to the Passyunk overpass will further reduce opportunities for dumping and protect new plantings as well.

The Streets Department is also planning a traffic signalization project at 26th Street and Penrose Avenue that will leave a portion of the remaining meadow area next to the Sun refinery in shape for meadow overseeding in the late fall and spring.

As the Gateway landscape becomes more sustainable over time,



controlling annual weeds on the embankments and will be used to maintain the warm season grass meadows on the ISTEA Expressway ramps.

These Gateway improvements have made a dramatic change to the airport access route. For example, ongoing maintenance of the 26th and Penrose plantings, coordinated by PHS, has been so effective in reducing trash and debris problems that the occasional dumping now draws immediate public outcry, showing that the level of trash acceptable just a few years ago is no longer tolerated. The ISTEA extension of the wood

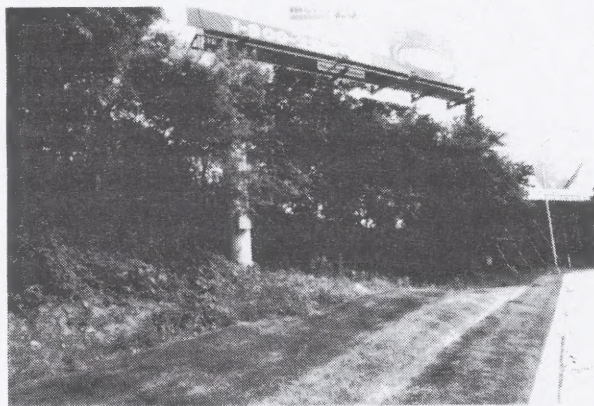
monitoring of the site will provide important information that will be used to upgrade the landscape management program. An ongoing monitoring project which will provide information for a site database to help understand changes in water regimen, plant communities and wildlife is planned.

At 26th Street, PHS and their partners have demonstrated the possibilities of bringing together horticultural expertise and aesthetic concerns with ecological ideas of reestablishing the native plant communities and habitats that were once the settings for our cities.



## MILESTONES: Philadelphia Outdoor Advertising Comes Aboard

Last fall we were happy to welcome Les Kaplan of **Philadelphia Outdoor Advertising** as a member of the 26th Street Gateway Project. With his initial contribution, we were able to remove from around his billboards many invasive weeds like poison ivy and honeysuckle, and over 35 weed trees and shrubs. Debris including metal, concrete, rocks, and trash filled several 20 cubic yard dumpsters. The slope was graded, allowing the installation of a narrow edge which was sodded. These improvements were effective deterrents to dumping and littering over the winter months.



The next phase of work includes ground surface stabilization to prevent erosion, further weed control, planting and maintenance. The turf edge will be widened and wood chips will be spread between the turf and toe of the slope. Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) and shrub amelanchier (*Amelanchier laevis*) will be planted along with broomsedge (*Andropogon virginicus*), a native

grass. This parcel has been included in our maintenance contract for 1995-96, and includes litter pick-up and removal, turf edge mowing, weeding and pruning.

The improvements made to this section contribute to the overall positive impact of the Gateway for visitors and residents alike. We are pleased to have Philadelphia Outdoor Advertising as a partner in greening our city.

### Horticultural Report: Our Battles with Invasive Weeds

*I will go root away  
The noisome weeds, that without profit suck  
The soil's fertility from wholesome flowers - Shakespeare*

According to *Webster's Dictionary*, *invasive* means "to overrun, to get into and spread harm." Plants growing in an undesirable location are considered weeds. If measures are not taken to combat invasive weeds, they will easily take over. At the 26th Street Gateway project we have three challenging invasive weeds:

**Japanese Knotweed**, *Polygonum cuspidatum* - a member of the bamboo family, imported from Europe in the late 19th century for its ornamental appearance. The name *Polygonum* means *many offspring*, and grows so tightly together in a colony that it is impenetrable to other plants. Thriving in wet areas like drainage ditches, it can also sprout through a crack in four inch asphalt. Its ability to grow two feet in ten days makes it particularly difficult to control. We are treating it with specially developed herbicides.

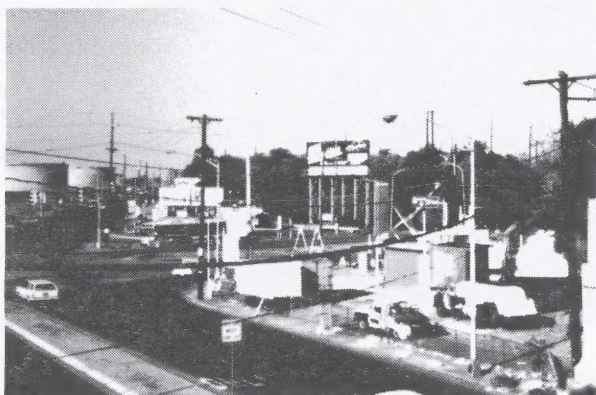
**Common Thistle**, Bull Thistle or *Cirsium arvense* and Canada Thistle or *C. vulgare* - the root of one thistle can spread up to twenty feet in all directions in just one season, and the seed is extremely fertile. Although bristly, the goldfinches that visit the meadows in the Fall find it very attractive. However, if we were to allow even a small colony to take hold, it would spread into (and overtake) our desired native plants. Monitoring and selective control are our options with this invasive species.

**Mugwort**, *Artemisia vulgaris* L. - a persistent, aromatic perennial that looks and smells like chrysanthemum, and for that reason, is often referred to as the chrysanthemum weed. Named for a noted woman botanist from the fourth century B.C., *Artemisia* of Caria, mugwort is an Old World plant that escaped from early herb gardens. It can grow practically anywhere, especially in dry fertile soils. As with thistle, we continue to monitor and selectively apply herbicide to this plant species.



## Penrose Meadows Grows

The installation of Penrose Meadows Phase II marks another 26th Street Gateway milestone. Travelers descending the Platt Bridge now encounter a harmonious, naturalistic landscape at Penrose Avenue and 26th Street. Last year, the remaining corners of the intersection joined the vibrant, flowering scene which has been greeting people on the original Penrose Meadows corner since 1990.



In June of 1994, under the direction of the **Philadelphia Department of Streets** with funds coming through **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation**, the post-industrial eyesore was transformed. First, before any plants could go in, the land had to be readied. Billboards had already been removed from the site years before, when the project first began. An abandoned gas station, asphalt paving, and underground tanks had to be removed from the northeast corner. Motor oil had seeped into the soil on

that corner, so that had to be removed as well. That done, the land on all three corners was gently reshaped into mounds to define the edge of the intersection.

The newly transformed landscape was planted to complement the existing one across the street. Groups of flowering shrubs, trees, grasses and wildflowers flank a narrow, grassy meadow as it weaves around the intersection. As in the original planting, native red cedar,



red maple and summersweet are the backbones of the groups. The native grass, *Andropogon virginicus*, surrounds the woody plants providing soft continuity and year-round interest.

Black-eyed Susans, daisies, sunflowers and butterfly weed are some of the "Ribbon of Gold" wildflowers which face the highway behind a wooden guardrail and brighten the summer scene. After a year in place, the flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees seem like they've been there forever, waiting to welcome passers-by to Philadelphia.

### On the Drawing Board...

- ☞ Girard Point - initial planting of trees in October 1994. More to come this fall.
- ☞ Plantings at the expansive northern end of the Conrail Embankments.
- ☞ More exploration into management of turf areas mowed higher (6-8") than a traditional lawn.
- ☞ Based on maintenance management experience gained this year, we will refine the comprehensive management plan.

#### For more information contact:

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215-625-8280